

**MINUTES**  
**COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES**  
**Friday – August 20, 2021 – 8:00 A.M.**  
**Google Meet**

**Commission Members present via Google Meet:** John Murphy (Chair), Mary Whisenand (Vice-Chair), Leland Shipley, Kevin Brown, Ajit Kumar

**Commission Members absent:** Anna Brown

**Staff Present via Google Meet:** Bill Brand, Greg Pieper, Christine Taylor, Gwen Howe, Lorie Easter, Donna Bura

**Others Present via Google Meet:** Katherine Harrington, Executive Director ICAA, Niki Conrad, Supervisor Webster County

- I. **Call to order**-John Murphy called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.
- II. **Introductions**- Introductions were made and a quorum was established.
- III. **Approval of May 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes** – Leland Shipley moved that the minutes be approved and Mary Whisenand seconded the motion. All commission members present voted aye. The motion carried.
- IV. **Approval of Agenda** – Kevin Brown moved that the agenda be approved and Ajit Kumar seconded the motion. All commission members present voted aye. The motion carried.
- V. **Approval of CSBG State Plan** – Ajit Kumar moved that CSBG State Plan be approved and Mary Whisenand seconded the motion. All commission members present voted aye. The motion carried.
- VI. **Approval of LIHEAP State Plan** – Mary Whisenand moved the LIHEAP State Plan be approved and Ajit Kumar seconded the motion. All commission members present voted aye. The motion carried.
- VII. **Administrator Report& Bureau Reports - Bill Brand**  
Bill Brand thanked everyone for joining the meeting. Bill explained he will give the administrative report along with the highlights of the bureau reports that were previously sent to the Commission. The Department of Human Rights transitioned back into the office for work and eligible staff can request to work remotely up to two days per week on a regular basis. This remote option started on August 1<sup>st</sup> for a 6 month trial period. Bill shared that the amount of money going through the DCAA to community action agencies has doubled due to the pandemic and DCAA staff have to account for every penny and make sure it is spent properly. He expressed that he is

proud of the way that both the DCAA staff and the fiscal staff have managed to navigate the influx in requests to get the money out to agencies.

Bill shared that LIHEAP received 78 million dollars in supplemental appropriations. The DCAA used the money to increase the limit amount of crisis assistance available to families. We contracted out 10 million dollars and will use the remaining dollars to combine with the FY22 appropriation. This will provide an increase in the regular benefit for households that apply for the winter. We will also use it for crisis assistance as the supplemental funding must be used by September 30, 2022. Bill also informed the Commission about the new Water Utility Assistance Program that will be administered like the LIHEAP program. This will be considered a crisis program to help families with arrearages of their water bills to help keep the water turned on. We are working with water companies on vendor agreements. Bill Marquess is taking the lead with this new program. Iowa was given about 10 million dollars for this program and we are not sure if this will be ongoing in the next fiscal years.

Bill reflected on the work that is done by the CSBG program by pointing out the results of the ASCI survey that showed that Iowa is one of two states to score in the top five in all seven satisfaction categories. The survey shows that our local agencies and ICAA have high trust and high customer satisfaction with the state CSBG office. Both Mary and John commented that the staff at the DCAA are doing a great job.

Bill shared that the FaDSS program, which is a home visitation program, has not been able to visit families during the pandemic. All of the visits have been done virtually with great success. In July, we lifted our policy from virtual to in home services if families were comfortable doing that. A few weeks later, the new Covid variant emerged and new guidance issued from the CDC. We then provided a new policy that vaccinated staff should still wear masks and social distance in the home and that all unvaccinated staff should continue to do home visits virtually. We will continue to monitor conditions with a goal to return to in-home visits for all families. The FaDSS Council has charged a committee to develop a FaDSS funding formula for the program. The recommendation will be based on allocation according to need and where low income families live in Iowa. John Murphy thanked the DCAA for taking a deliberate scientific look at how the funding should be allocated and also for keeping the health and safety of FaDSS staff a priority. Mary Whisenand also shared that the FaDSS program was given an additional one million dollars in appropriations this year. Mary was able to thank a lot of the legislators personally for that increase. Bill thanked the Commission and ICAA for all their work to help make that happen.

#### **VIII. ICCA Activities Report-Katherine Harrington**

Katherine Harrington updated the Commission about ICAA activities. Katherine shared that ICAA has formed a Legislative Committee that includes: Dick Sievers, Danna Buls, Trisha Wilkerson, Brenda Fry and Jamie Whitney who will work on the legislative agenda in the upcoming months. They will also continue with the firm Eide and Walton for lobbying services for the next legislative session.

Katherine shared they processed 4,910 applications for the Iowa Rent and Utility Assistance Program. The contract with ICAA and the Iowa Finance Authority will end on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. They are currently managing 14 disasters and delivering services and case management to 14 counties in Iowa. They are also waiting to hear about funding for the Tenant Based Rental Assistance Grant through IFA.

ICAA is also waiting for the national survey from the National Partnership for our own training and technical assistance survey. ICAA will be holding an Orientation to Community Action webinar from 11-12 on August 30<sup>th</sup>. We continue to provide training to Community Action Board Directors to meet the CSBG Organizational Standards. Katherine wanted to recognize four people who completed their certified Community Action Professional certification. Keri Burian from HACAP. Karli Schmelzer from Northeast Iowa. Carrie Sodders from MICA. Chrishelle Stavers from Northeast Iowa. They go through extensive preparation to take the test for certification. We also continue to offer the High Impact and Elite Leadership training in October and November.

We are launching an ICAA book club for anyone who is interested. We will be reading a book called Broken in America written by Joanne Goldblum and Colleen Shaddox. The authors will do a live Q&A with us in September.

- IX. **Appointment of Nomination Committee-** Leland Shipley and Mary Whisenend were appointed to the Nomination Committee.
- X. **Appointment of Legislative Committee** – Kevin Brown and Ajit Kumar were appointed to the Legislative Committee.
- XI. **Other** – Ajit Kumar shared that he feels very proud to be associated with this group especially during these challenging times. He is proud to serve on the Commission and of the way the DCAA responds to challenges. Bill Brand reminded the Commission that expenses will be reimbursed for travel to a community agency for the next Commission meeting.
- XII. **Next meeting:** November 12, 2021 Sieda Community Action, Ottumwa 8:30 a.m.
- XIII. **Adjournment-** John Murphy adjourned the meeting at 9:24 a.m.

Respectfully submitted  
Donna Bura